Greetings to all. The semester has been flying by. I hope everything has been going well thus far, and that you are able to relax a bit during spring break.

As I have mentioned before, one of the hidden gems at Villanova is its degree program at the State Correctional Institution at Graterford, where selected inmates can work toward associates and bachelor degrees. The program originated in our department and continues to be administered here. It is something we are very, very proud of.

There are a number of good things that flow from such programs, including reduced recidivism and improved behavior within the institution, in addition to the personal rewards that come from greater education. In this issue of Interactions, we hear about another plus – the beneficial impacts on family members of students. Matthew Slaughter, a graduate, describes how he became a positive role model for his siblings and child by earning his associates degree.

And speaking of gems, anyone who has entered the department office or contacted us has undoubtedly been welcomed by smiles or pleasant voices eager to help. Those belong to Mary Ann Hostler and Sarah Spencer, the department’s administrative assistants. Knowledgeable, hard working and invariably positive, Mary Ann and Sarah are always there to support faculty members, students and other visitors in whatever they need and to ensure that the department runs as smoothly as possible. In this issue, we profile them both.

A great strength of our department is the ability of our faculty members to publish important research. Our newest professor, Melissa Hodges, is no exception. Melissa is working with Prof. Paula England, a top gender scholar and recent Fritz Nova speaker, on the so-called “mommy penalty” in the labor market. Documenting and explaining this apparent wage disparity is an important sociological contribution with various policy implications. Be sure to read about Melissa’s work in the newsletter, and stop by her office to talk with her about it.

Finally, study abroad can enhance our students’ education in several ways, especially when students go to less traveled places. Such was the case for one of our sociology majors, Erika Montes. Erika spent a semester in Copenhagen, Denmark, taking courses but also using the opportunity to explore other countries and encounter new cultures. As you will see, it was a terrific experience, and one that hopefully will encourage other students to pursue similar trips.

Remember that my door (and phone line) are always open, so please let me know if I can help you in anyway. And be sure to visit our web site to keep abreast of new developments, such as a new video1 by one of our top students, Emily Walthouse, who talks about her internship experience and the value of her sociology studies.

Good luck with the rest of the semester!

-Dr. Robert DeFina

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1 www1.villanova.edu/villanova/artsci/sociology/opportunities/studinternexp.html
A Liberal Nation with Liberal Education

- by Erika Montes, Soc ’16

During the spring semester of 2015 I studied abroad in Denmark, immersing myself within the culture. Spending my time in the lovely city of Copenhagen (København) was a breath of fresh air. It was a time of exploration and a moment of realization of who I really am. I traveled to several countries including Spain, France, Italy, Sweden, and the Netherlands, taking in the customs, food, people, and culture. Luckily, due to my proficiency speaking Spanish as a Hispanic American woman, I was able to maneuver my way through Spain without an issue and was able to twist the language enough to communicate with people in France and Italy.

While in Denmark, I took two sociology courses titled “Prostitution and the Sex Trade” and “Pornography in Scandinavia.” Both of these courses opened my eyes to the hidden sexual worlds that we all live in, either through actual physical contact or through an imaging screen. At first, one may be puzzled that these topics are taught in an academic setting. However, they raise complex issues about gender relations, work, and criminality among others, things about which sociological theory and evidence has a lot to say. The courses allowed me to more fully understand these important social issues, the implications for those involved, and needed policy actions.

As a sociologist, it is extremely important to learn about a range of societal trends and in particular their causes and consequences. Taking the Prostitution course, for example, made me more aware of the pervasiveness of sex trafficking and the characteristics and motivations of people involved. Furthermore, the course gave me the opportunity to really delve into the topic, including the question of whether prostitution should be legalized, something that the Danes have asked themselves since it has been decriminalized.

In summary, taking these courses abroad led to an even deeper curiosity about deviant behavior in society. It has also helped me feel more comfortable speaking with men and women directly involved in the industry, as we had many guest speakers who were intimately familiar with the trade. Although I will be pursuing Human Resources in the future, I believe that these courses and experiences have opened my mind to worldwide societal issues and strengthened my “sociological imagination.” In particular, going to Denmark especially increased my appetite for learning more about the world and exploring more countries.

“The Snow Ball Effect”

- by Matthew S. Slaughter

Greetings to all my readers of this essay. It is amazing how the actions of others can motivate life changing decisions for others in a positive way. There is a wise saying which advises, “If you throw a pebble in a river you will create a thousand ripples.” Such a quote could apply to my affiliations with Villanova University.

My acceptance to the Villanova Liberal Arts program at Graterford Penitentiary has not only changed my life tremendously, but also the lives of my immediate family. For example, once my family members learned that I had achieved my associates degree with Villanova, two of my siblings were inspired to pursue their bachelor’s degrees. The news also helped to motivate my oldest child to go to truck driving school and to earn his CDL license. In addition, my success helped to persuade another of my relatives to stop hustling and to procure his GED diploma. As a result, he has found a legitimate job and is headed in a positive direction.
New Findings on the Motherhood Wage Penalty
- by Dr. Melissa Hodges

Last semester, Paula England, preeminent scholar of gender pay gaps, gave the Fritz Nova address at Villanova. She and I, along with two colleagues, are collaborating on a study investigating the “motherhood wage penalty.” It is well-established that working mothers, on average, earn 5 percent less than their childfree counterparts (Budig & England, 2001). Many factors contribute to the penalty, including education, work experience, and work hours. However, after controlling for these and other factors, a substantial penalty remains. Experimental studies find that employers often view mothers more negatively in terms of hiring, promotion, and wage offers (Correll, Benard & Paik, 2007), thus, employer discrimination partially explains this residual penalty.

Yet, a key question remains unanswered in the literature: Is the size of this penalty largest among the most or least advantaged women? To address this question, our study uses a newly available method, unconditional quantile regression, to assess how penalties vary by intersections of skill, wage level, and race. We find that the most advantaged women—white women with high skills and high wages—experience the highest total penalties. Due to their high wage returns to work experience, even small amounts of time out of employment for child rearing prove costly for these women. However, residual penalties do not differ consistently by race, skill, or wage; they affect advantaged and disadvantaged women approximately equally. Thus, we find no clear evidence that advantaged women suffer any more or less discrimination due to motherhood (England, Bearak, Budig, & Hodges, 2014).

One lesson from our results is the importance of employing an intersectional lens in examining gender wage inequality. Disadvantage associated with motherhood afflicts different women. Black women, on average, have lower wages than white women, but have lower penalties for motherhood. Meanwhile, the most advantaged white women incur the highest motherhood penalties, but they typically earn much more than other groups. Indeed, their higher penalties result from an aspect of their advantage—their steeper wage trajectories give them more to lose in future wages if they leave employment. Our findings indicate that to better address the gender pay gap, policy makers must also account for the differential impact of motherhood on wages for different groups of women.

References

“\textit{The Snow Ball Effect}” (continued from p. 2)

Whenever I talk with any of my family members during a visit or on the phone, they always tell me how proud they are of me for participating in the Villanova Program at Graterford. They always tell me that it is because of \textit{me} making a positive change in my life and exemplifying the importance of higher education, that they have been driven to do the same.

In all honesty, I owe this blessing of my family members’ deep recognition of my hard work and desire to turn my life around to Villanova University. Villanova has not only changed my life, but also has influenced an entire family’s. I truly believe that Villanova is a blessing sent by God to Graterford Penitentiary and I am thankful that I have the opportunity to be a part of its wonderful program.
Congratulations to Dr. Allison Payne who was invited to compete for and won the opportunity to write a white paper on school safety by The National Institute of Justice for the Comprehensive School Safety Initiative! Her article will focus on school climate and will be posted to the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) website.

She also received a Villanova University Summer Grant for 2016.

Administrative Assistant Spotlight

Our department is incredibly lucky to have administrative assistants that are second to none. Mary Ann and Sarah work extremely hard for all of the faculty and students with great poise and grace. This section includes a little bit about both of them. Next time you stop by SAC 204 please thank them for all that they do!

Mary Ann Hostler

I have been an employee of Villanova University for over 40 years. I was first hired in June of 1975, straight out of high school. For the first five years of my employment, I was a secretary for the Sociology Department which was then located on the second floor of Vasey Hall. In 1980, I transferred to the Criminal Justice Program and the Human Organization Science Program under the direction of Dr. James J. McKenna, Jr. Human Organization Science was an umbrella graduate program. Students were able to earn a master’s degree in Criminal Justice Administration, Health Care Administration, Human Resource Development, Human Services Administration, or Public Administration. In this role I also supported the Villanova Liberal Arts Program at Graterford Penitentiary which was founded in 1972. As the graduate program dissolved I found my new home in the Department of Sociology and Criminology. I guess one could say that my career at Villanova has come full circle.

Besides seeing me in the SOC/CRM department in SAC 204, you may have noticed me around campus in other places. I worked Concessions for both men’s basketball and football games and sold tickets at the men’s lacrosse and women’s basketball games. I enjoy supporting our Wildcats and engaging in conversation with familiar fans before game time.

Not only am I a Villanova employee, but I am also a Villanova mom. Two of my daughters took classes here.

Sarah Spencer

I have been a member of the Villanova community for 15 years. I originally started out in the Bartley Print Center and then moved to the SOC/CRM Department in 2010. In 2005 I received the Faculty Award. It is presented by the Faculty Congress, on behalf of the faculty as a whole, to acknowledge and honor the contributions of staff members. I enjoy working with the faculty and especially the students.

A little about me. I come from a big family; five sisters and one brother. I have three children and six grandchildren. I love to sew and in my spare time I make crafts that I sell at various craft fairs, including Villanova’s Holiday Bazaar. You may have seen me there just this past December selling my heating pads. Thank you to anyone who purchased one!

I love to cook but am gluten free so if you have any recipe suggestions I’d love to hear from you. Please feel free to come by anytime to say hello!